

I don't want to hear about people coming to the floor and talking about national security when they are leaving all these positions vacant.

Now, let me specifically address the nominees that we are voting on. I want to express my support for the nominations of Daniel Kritenbrink to be the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific. Whoa. China.

Karen Donfried to be the Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasian Affairs. Oh, we are trying to have a strong transatlantic alliance. We are talking about Ukraine, Belarus.

Monica Medina to be the Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs—Scientific Affairs. Yeah, COVID.

Mary Catherine Phee to be the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. We are having a huge challenge. I have been privileged to meet two of the African Presidents here in the last couple of days since they are here for U.N. Week. China is all over Africa. We need an Assistant Secretary who is engaged in the continent of Africa to be promoting the views of America's democracy, human rights, rule of law, investment, trade, and opportunity. We are nowhere there.

Todd Robinson to be the Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement. You know, I hear speeches about fentanyl; I agree. Wouldn't it be nice to have the Assistant Secretary of State to work hemispherically and beyond to make sure that we don't get more fentanyl into our country?

And Jessica Lewis to be the Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs. If ever we needed someone who is engaged on the conduct of political and military affairs and how that faces national security challenges, it is now.

These are the people we are voting on. These are the people who overwhelmingly came out of the committee on either unanimous or bipartisan votes. These are superbly qualified nominees, and I have, if it is not obvious, a very deep frustration about them languishing on the floor for weeks—weeks—due to Republican holds. And I have a frustration that we have not been able to more precipitously move people to the committee to bring them to the floor.

We have close to 100 nominations for the State Department and USAID that are pending. That is a crisis number. These nominations include positions and ambassadorships to countries throughout Latin America and Africa: places where competition with China and Russia is real, where we need Ambassadors in place to project U.S. power, to assist and protect U.S. citizens, and to promote our companies.

We are less safe when our national security Agencies are so underwhelmed. We owe it to the Senate and the American people to fix this problem.

I am pleased to be supporting the nomination of Ambassador Daniel Kritenbrink to be Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs. In recent years, and on a bipartisan basis, the United States has reassessed and rebalanced our approach to the Indo-Pacific to take into account the reality of our competitive relationship with China. So this is a region rich with pressing challenges from North Korea's nuclear and missile programs to a rollback in human rights and democracy across the region.

Ambassador Kritenbrink will be able to draw from decades of experience in the region to lead our efforts in this area.

Also pleased to be supporting Dr. Karen Donfried's nomination, which is a testament to the Biden administration's effort to rebuild the transatlantic relationship, which was significantly damaged by the last administration.

I know that Dr. Donfried's knowledge and experience—including previously as the Senior Director for European Affairs at the National Security Council—will serve the country well as we seek to renew that transatlantic relationship.

These are issues dealing with Russia, Turkey, Belarus, our support for Ukraine. I hear all the time in speeches about support for these countries. Wouldn't it be nice to have the person—forget about nice. Isn't it critical to have the person that can be promoting that view?

There is Monica Medina to be the Assistant Secretary for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs. I am convinced that she is eminently qualified, including the time she spent as Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Oceans and Atmosphere at the Department of Commerce and in a broad variety of leadership roles focused on ocean conservation, environmental policy, and science.

Likewise, I am pleased to support Ambassador Mary Catherine Phee to be the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. As I said, we have an enormous challenge on the African continent.

I support Todd Robinson to be a leader as the Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. If we want to deal with the coyotes whom my colleague was talking about, let's put somebody in a position to go after them. I know this work is critical to our international efforts to combat narcotics, to deal with fentanyl, and to deal with the trafficking routes that extend through Mexico and all the way back to China.

Then there is Jessica Lewis, finally. It is with a mixture of deep pride and some sorrow that this body will consider the nomination of Ms. Lewis to be the next Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs.

Almost 20 years ago, I hired Jessica for her first job on Capitol Hill as my

foreign policy adviser and staff director of the House Foreign Affairs Committee's Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, of which I was ranking member. After moving to the Senate and working for Senator Harry Reid for nearly a decade, she took up the staff director position of the Foreign Relations Committee. Throughout her tenure in all of these positions, Members, Senators, and staff on both sides of the aisle benefited from her deep knowledge of foreign policy, her leadership, and indeed her love for Congress itself, with all its nuanced rules and procedures.

Jessica is recognized across party lines as one of the most effective and trusted leaders on Capitol Hill. She is a trailblazer for women in national security. When approved by the Senate—and I have no doubt she will be—she will be the first woman confirmed to hold this position.

It would be impossible to catalogue all of her accomplishments, from getting countless bills passed through the committee and into law, supporting efforts to conduct serious oversight of the executive branch regardless of which party is in power, to striving to build a truly diverse staff of the Foreign Relations Committee. I have no doubt she will bring her commitment to mentorship, integrity, and public service to the State Department as well.

So we expect to see her, after she gets confirmed, back here answering questions and being part of this incredibly important job that she will be doing in bringing political and military affairs together.

I hope that we do not have to go through these 100 nominees, through 2-hour sessions of each nominee, in order to get them to start working for U.S. national security. That is what is at stake here.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

#### COLLIERVILLE SHOOTING

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, as I come to the floor today, I want to acknowledge that we have an active shooter situation in Collierville, TN, right outside of Memphis. We have spoken with authorities. We have worked with State and Federal authorities. We are aware that there are 13 individuals who have been shot. The shooter is dead. But we are very grateful for law enforcement that have stepped up in this situation and prayerful for those who have been adversely impacted and have been victims of this shooting situation.

Mr. President, I ask that I have permission to complete my remarks before the scheduled vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, this week, we have heard from many of my Democratic colleagues about the various ways that Republicans have

supposedly dragged this country to the brink of collapse. But what they have ignored in their manufactured hysteria and disgust in some part is the fact that it is, indeed, Democrats who have control of the entire U.S. Government at this point. It was the Democrats who chose to govern alone starting on day one of the Biden administration.

Over the past 8 months, Joe Biden and his Democratic friends have indulged their worst instincts and taken unprecedented steps to bring every single aspect of American life under the control of the Federal Government.

They are the ones who are now threatening the American people with shutdowns and default rather than using the tools at their disposal to raise the debt ceiling and fund the government.

They are the ones who chose to squander the trust of the American people on a spending spree that would waste trillions of dollars on liberal pet projects and a rapidly expanding welfare state. The Democrats have repeatedly claimed that these programs will make us happier, healthier, wealthier, freer, but in reality, their agenda has done nothing but make things worse.

Historic spending has given rise to historic inflation that is on track to stay with us until the end of Joe Biden's Presidency. In Tennessee, it is one of the things that I hear about most. Groceries are more expensive than ever. Gas prices are at a 7-year high. Rent has skyrocketed, along with natural gas prices, which are set to break a decade-old record just in time for colder weather to set in. It is bad for hard-working taxpayers. They are tired of it.

According to the Wall Street Journal, not even a well-earned hourly raise will be enough to pull these workers out of the hole. Inflation is so bad, it has negated the budget padding these people should be enjoying from bigger paychecks. Pay adjusted for inflation actually fell. It fell half a percent in August. These aren't luxuries. The policies advocated by the Democrats have made life itself too expensive to afford. From the second they wake up in the morning to the moment their head hits their pillow at night, the American people are bleeding cash, paying higher taxes, and some are beginning to lose hope.

Still, the Democrats insist that if we surrender even more control, all will be well. Well, that talking point might work when you are talking to the camera, but it is not going to work on the people. It is not working on Tennesseans because they understand that ceding control means surrendering freedom, and freedom is about all that we have left.

When I talk to Tennesseans, they are not holding back how they feel about this so-called transformative agenda. For them, this isn't just a battle of ideas. They are fighting a war against the onslaught of radical socialism. They are afraid of Joe Biden's runaway

White House because they have seen how destructive the administration's unilateral decisions can be. They have watched thousands of jobs evaporate and the southern border turned into a lawless war zone because the President wanted it this way.

So here is what Tennesseans want to know. If they can't trust the Democrats to do the bare minimum, why should they trust that even more spending and more centralized control and more big government will work out in their favor? They have had 8 months' worth of proof that the exact opposite is true.

This country might be hanging on by a thread. For my part, I will listen to my fellow Tennesseans and will play no role in facilitating the erosion of freedom and the dignity of American life.

I implore my colleagues in the majority: Listen to the people. They have the right to live their lives on their own terms, not with lockdowns and mandates—on their terms. They don't want have to depend on a government check to feed themselves or get their children back to school.

There is a reason that our Constitution is one of the enumerated Federal powers. It is not the place of Congress or the Executive to flip this concept on its head and force the American people to justify their right to live free from this destructive cycle of debt and dependency. Our rights come from God, and I assure you, no government body could ever improve upon them.

I yield the floor.

#### VOTE ON KRITENBRINK NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Kritenbrink nomination?

Mr. SCHATZ. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

The result was announced—yeas 72, nays 14, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 379 Ex.]

#### YEAS—72

Baldwin	Grassley	Ossoff
Barrasso	Hagerty	Padilla
Bennet	Hassan	Peters
Blackburn	Heinrich	Portman
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Reed
Blunt	Hirono	Romney
Booker	Hoeven	Rosen
Brown	Hyde-Smith	Schatz
Cantwell	Kaine	Schumer
Capito	Kelly	Scott (SC)
Cardin	King	Shaheen
Carper	Klobuchar	Shelby
Casey	Lankford	Sinema
Collins	Leahy	Smith
Coons	Lujan	Stabenow
Cornyn	Lummis	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	Manchin	Tester
Cramer	Markey	Warner
Crapo	McConnell	Warnock
Duckworth	Menendez	Warren
Durbin	Merkley	Whitehouse
Fischer	Murkowski	Wicker
Gillibrand	Murphy	Wyden
Graham	Murray	Young

#### NAYS—14

Boozman	Ernst	Rubio
Braun	Hawley	Sasse
Cassidy	Lee	Thune
Cotton	Marshall	Tuberville
Cruz	Paul	

#### NOT VOTING—14

Burr	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Daines	Moran	Tillis
Feinstein	Risch	Toomey
Inhofe	Rounds	Van Hollen
Johnson	Sanders	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KAINE). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 333, Karen Erika Donfried, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (European Affairs and Eurasian Affairs).

Charles E. Schumer, Robert Menendez, Patrick J. Leahy, Patty Murray, Maria Cantwell, Sheldon Whitehouse, Brian Schatz, Debbie Stabenow, Catherine Cortez Masto, Christopher A. Coons, Ron Wyden, Margaret Wood Hassan, Edward J. Markey, Benjamin L. Cardin, Richard J. Durbin, Tina Smith, Elizabeth Warren, Angus S. King, Jr.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Karen Erika Donfried, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (European Affairs and Eurasian Affairs), shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.